

THE GREAT “I AM’S” of JESUS

by

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CHAPTER SIX

I AM THE RESURRECTION

(John 11:25)

When Mary and Martha sent for Jesus because of the desperate illness of their brother, Lazarus, Jesus delayed His response to their call. But after Lazarus had died, Jesus visited the sisters. Martha went out to meet Him in the way before He arrived at the home. Upon seeing Jesus she greeted Him with a rebuke for the Lord's delay in coming, but with the hope expressed in the word: **“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died”** (John 11:21). Anxious about her brother's condition, wearied with waiting on Lazarus, and grieved because of the passing of one she loved, Martha expressed it all in the mild rebuke, **“if thou hadst been here.”**

Jesus assured Martha that her brother would live again. She responded that she knew he would live again in the resurrection at the last day. Did she correctly interpret what Jesus meant when He said, **“Thy brother shall rise again?”** Whether the Lord meant to tell Martha that He would raise Lazarus from the grave or to assure her of the resurrection is not clear in the context. When Martha spoke of the resurrection, Jesus immediately assured her that the way of the resurrection was through Jesus Christ.

Just as the way of salvation is by means of a person, so the resurrection is assured through the person of Jesus. It is not offered as a reward for good works or proper system of doctrine. It is interpreted as a personal promise from the person who is able to make the promise. The resurrection is through Jesus Christ our Lord: **“I am the resurrection”** (John 11:25).

“He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25), Jesus said. This is the true formula of life. It matters not whether the Christian be dead or alive so far as the flesh is concerned, he is alive through Jesus Christ. Whoever may be alive in the flesh without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is dead though he liveth. We are dead men without Christ.

In like manner Jesus gave Martha the assurance that **“whomever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”** Then Jesus asked Martha if she believed what He said?

Do you believe it? The Christian has the assurance that he lives now and will forever. Death cannot stop his living. Paul expressed it perfectly when he reached the climax, **“Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”** (I Corinthians 15:54, 55).

Along with Paul, we can give thanks to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul expressed it in finality. There is nothing to fear in life or in death. Even death itself is swallowed up in victory.

Whoever believes in Jesus and takes Him at His word when He says, **“I am the resurrection,”** has the assurance which Paul expressed in Romans 8:38, 39, **“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Paul’s discussion had to do with the hopelessness of man in the flesh. He had said, **“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”** (Romans 7:24).

Then Paul started out upon the discussion which ended in the above assurance that nothing could separate the believer from the love of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

From his exclamation about the wretchedness of man, Paul went into the ecstasy of Romans 8:1, **“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”**

The apostle must have had in mind the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus when the plan of salvation was given and the condemnation resulting from failure to believe in Jesus as the Christ (John 3:18), when he spoke so encouragingly concerning the freedom of the believer. He is not condemned for failing to believe because he believes, and there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

Martha, do you believe this? Friend, do you believe it? This is the heart of the gospel. The resurrection is the hope of man.

The burning bush at Horeb startled Moses because it was not consumed in the flames. More astounding than the flaming bush was the fire that illumined the heart of Israel’s leader and the world’s outstanding general.

A blade of grass blushes in rainbow colors through the dew of a spring morning, not knowing it must hide beneath the winter snows and give place to a new sprig in a coming spring.

A bottle of peas, found in the grave of an Egyptian monarch, planted in the soil three thousand years later, sprang to life and bore fruit. Who can say that the Egyptian mummy is more than the shell in which eternal life was housed?

A drop of water teaches its lesson of immortality. Under the microscope it is found to be a seething mass of living things. What becomes of it? It lifts as vapor and floats in the elements until some unseen force and inaudible voice converts it into rain. It falls upon the crest of the hill, unites with other raindrops, and flows in a rivulet to join a larger stream.

Singing and sparkling its reflection of the sky and overhanging trees, it dances merrily on over the falls, by sleeping villages, through farms and ranches, around eddies, by great cities into the ocean, making its contribution to the tolling waters of the eternal sea.

The poet sings: “Roll on thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll.” And another writes:

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul;
While the swift seasons roll.
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast
Till thou at length art free
Leaving thine out-grown shell
By life's unresting sea.

From the dewdrop on the hill to the rolling sea is but a step in the course of eternity. The sea becomes vapor and joins the dewdrop in making rain.

The beautiful butterfly gracing the meadow was but yesterday a cocoon, and the other day only an ugly worm. Yet the silk of commerce, which enhances and adorns the human form, is the product of nature's transition from one form of life to another. Tomorrow there will be butterflies.

The pretty colors adorning the forest speak of immortality. The ripened fruit of the trees provides food for the animals of the forest; but here and there an acorn, bearing in its shell the essence of sylvan life, will evade the sharp teeth of the squirrel and hide under the leaves. Here it awaits the resurrection of spring and, responding to nature's call, will announce a century later that its fruit is for the propagation of life. The green of spring and the rainbow harmony of autumn both declare the reality of life.

There is in all these things a hint of everlasting life which fires the soul of man to look toward the eternal city whose builder and maker is God. From the helpless babe, reaching upward toward caressing hands, to tottering old age, leaning on the everlasting arms, there is a constant urge that lifts and leans and reaches to the immortal. **“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory”** (I Corinthians 15:54).

The field of science bears its testimony to immortality. There is hardly a scientist of repute who will contend that the mind is subservient to the brain, that the thinking process is a mechanical operation of tissues alone. Rather it is the opinion of those who think, that the mind operates through the brain and that consciousness is more than mechanics. Are you house or tenant?

It is declared that the body is completely made over every seven years, but none will contend that the mind, the spirit, the personality, is entirely new. What becomes of thought? Is it not continuous? Does it not supersede?

Here one is reminded of the striking definition Dr. E. Y. Mullins gave to mind and matter: "What is mind? No matter. What is matter? Never mind."

All science is constructed on the assumption that the *universe is an order*. If it is order, there is intelligence behind it, and man's position is elevated to that of the highest order. Scientists may explain mechanical processes and may reduce elements to atoms, but the respectful scientist stands with hat off and head bowed in the presence of the life which is behind the most extensive test of dissolution; for there is life.

"*Philosophy* comes to the rescue of the doctrine of immortality. Socrates reached his highest eloquence when he spoke of the Oracle within which was his guiding light and which he declared to be eternal. The universality of belief in the eternal existence of the soul has its weight on the side of immortality. Man does not instinctively and naturally believe that which is false. The desire which God has planted in the human breast that reaches out and up, gives evidence of the eternity of life.

By analogy the continuity of life is verified.

- The beetle leaves its hollow shell of an old house for a new; and the snake sheds its skin.
- The bird bursts from its outgrown shell and chirps joyfully in its new found life.
- The tadpole today breathes in water through gills: tomorrow it will breathe air through lungs as a frog.

From the caterpillar to the butterfly goes the process of life. From the maturing flower to the sprouting plant; from the swelling acorn to the spreading tree; from the little child to the mature man, one calling the other father—this is the analogy of life. Science, philosophy, and experience all together assert the indestructibility of matter.

If atoms cannot be destroyed, surely personality can persist. Hammer, heat, shake, electrify as you will, solids become liquids, liquids become gases, and gases explode; but the ultimate result is as the beginning. There are still atoms which proper processes could convert into original elements. If this is true of things, surely thoughts, emotions, personality will continue.

Again *nature permits no waste*. Plants grow, bear, die, fertilize the soil, and contribute to the sum total of existence. Is man less durable? If his physical body is composed of indestructible matter, how much more can we declare the permanence of his soul!

From the field of PSYCHOLOGY comes stronger evidence of immortality of the soul. By looking within man finds a thinking, emotional existence. *Cogito ergo sum*, declares the great thinker. "I think, therefore, I am."

It is impossible for one who thinks to imagine himself annihilated or conceive of his thoughts being completely obliterated. By observation of others one is convinced that there is life which cannot be seen, that there are thoughts beyond human explanation, that there is a *summum bonum* of existence which is beyond the capacity of the human mind to conceive.

A constantly enlarging vision makes one think of the beyond.

- The higher one climbs the farther he can see.
- The greater the progress, the broader the vision.
- The higher the reach, the wider the horizon—finite to infinite.

There is a soul instinct which is stronger even than the physical urges of hunger and self-preservation. There is a constant challenge for supremacy of spirit. There is that within man which rises to meet his Maker.

Immortality reaches its highest conception in Christianity. There is positive declaration from definite revelation that makes for immortality. Job answered, **“If a man die, shall he live again?”** Paul declared that One **“hath brought life and immortality to light,”** and Jesus said, **“I am the resurrection, and the life,”** and again, **“because I live ye shall live also.”**

The resurrection of Christ is the greatest proof of the immortality of the soul. Because there has been actual demonstration of immortality by the raising of one from the dead, there is proof that eternal life is possible. The proofs of Christ’s resurrection are conclusive: the empty tomb . . . the ten appearances . . . the perfect life . . . predictions of prophets and Jesus . . . the lives of Christians.

The attributes of God as revealed to man, being eternal in nature, demand immortality.

Man is created in the image of God, not that his flesh and form are the physical reproduction of God, but the attributes of God are reflected in man.

- Holiness is not an achievement of man, but an investment of the divine.
- Truth is perfectly revealed only in Christ.
- Justice is administered in the world by men according to man’s laws; but eternal justice can be administered only by God.

What justice man can exemplify in the world is the result of his likeness to God. God is expressed by the symbol of love. This is the perfect likeness of God. The first thing we seek to teach little children about God is His attribute of love.

It is the soul which loves and expresses the attributes of God. Because God has made man like Himself, man must live forever. Hands are lifted up to God in prayer: there is communion between earth and heaven. The eyes look heavenward: God looks down in love. Love reaches up to God: God reaches out to man in divine love. The soul persists.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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